Kaplan Intrigue Thickens

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can Republic. Vidal's father is said to have been a great friend of the late dictator, Trujillo, of that country.

The business grew into tremendous proportions and Kaplan's father then established the Kaplan ring now worth 40,000,000 dollars.

"Before my father died," Joel David Kaplan said without apparent malice, "my uncle persuaded him to turn over the entire estate to him, therefore he is now legal administrator."

But he added that it wasn't logical somehow that since his uncle controls all that money that could be the reason for wanting his nephew kept in jail.

"I think it has more to do with the fact that my uncle is politically powerful and ambitious to be even more politically powerful in the American administration. Somewhere it helps him to help the CIA."

In retracing the circumstances that led up to his being accused of killing Vidal, Kaplan said that he and the alleged slain man also had business dealings in molasses dehydration. In 1962 Vidal was in Mexico apparently related to business matters. He sent for Kaplan who came here from San Antonio, Tex. Vidal had made a reservation at the Del Prado Hotel but preferred staying at the Hilton, which turned out to be the last place he was supposed to have been seen alive. Vidal had come to Mexico with a soldier dressed in civilian clothes, "a Central American type, I couldn't tell exactly from what country, but his name was Méndez. He was never heard from again."

Kaplan said that he had come with a man named Koppelson of Israel and another named Petrushansky, a Russian-born American. Both were later acquitted at the same trial. The prisoner explained that he and the two above mentioned men were told to wait for Vidal by Vidal at the Hilton. Vidal never showed up.

When Kaplan was tried for his murder his defense lawyer, Victor Velázquez pointed out that Vidal had talked to other people after the date of his alleged death. He was later reported to have crossed the Guatemalan border, then the El Salvador border.

Nevertheless, a dead body was produced, never having been proved to be that of Vidal, and Kaplan was convicted.

Since Kaplan spends his days reading books and newspapers he knows the latest rumor in the case that Vidal is reported to have been seen in Cuba. He said: "This is a good possibility even though Vidal played a double role of helping Castro and the CIA. It might be convenient now for Castro to overlook Vidal's past dealings with him because of the help Vidal can give him now. This is why I think Vidal wanted people to believe him dead. He crossed so many people his life was in danger. He had made many clandestine trips to Cuba."

Kaplan said his case was appealed many times by Velázquez and that ten judges refused to handle it. "I have been denied every recourse to law" he said firmly.

And does he fully trust his defense attorney?

"Yes, I do. But I'm not so sure I trust Louis Nizer in New York who is represented by Velázquez here. I think a lot of pressure is being put on Nizer and that he hasn't helped as much as he could. Besides, of late, he seems to want to wash his hands of the entire matter."

Kaplan Can Only 'Wait and Watch'

By PEARL GONZALEZ

THE NEWS spent a half hour Saturday noon talking with Joel David Kaplan in Lecumberri jail.

The man who has served over five years of a 28-year sentence for the alleged slaying of Louis Vidal, Jr., appeared docile and patient as he waits to hear the outcome of the recent statement of defense lawyer Victor Velázquez that he will soon be released because it had been a perversion of Mexican law to convict him since there was never any proof that Vidal was ever killed.

Does Kaplan believe he

(Editor's Note: Joel David Kaplan of New York is serving a 28-year sentence in Lecumberri Prison for murder. An appeal is now pending with a decision expected in June. Kaplan's attorney, Victor Velázquez, maintains the body of Kaplan's alleged victim, Louis Vidal, was never properly identified. In recent weeks Kaplan has been linked with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. He is the nephew of J.M. Kaplan, head of the Kaplan Fund which reportedly acted as a front for the CIA. Kaplan admits entering Mexico under a forged passport in 1961. Shortly after his arrival police reported the death of Louis Vidal. Kaplan was then brought here under cloudy circumstances to stand trial. Pearl González is reporting on the case.)

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THE NEWS some of the circumstances involved.

He said that he came to Mexico to look into the matter of Kaplan's having been sentenced to 28 years in prison after he was convicted of killing Luis Melchor Vidal, Jr., a fellow New Yorker, in 1961 when both were here.

Kaplan is the nephew of J. M. Kaplan, president and treasurer of the J. M. Kaplan Fund, Inc., a supposed channel for transmission of funds abroad for the C.I.A. Raymond's San Francisco-based magazine was the first to confirm the CIA has been using front organizations to distribute funds.

Raymond said that after he had been denied entrance to Lecumberri jail to see the prisoner Kaplan last Sunday two tall, heavy, burly Mexicans knocked on his door at the Hotel Hilton the following morning. A friend who was in the room with the reporter answered the door and was asked if a Mr. Raymond was there.

Raymond remarked that "they weren't the types you would ask in for tea" and the fact that he wasn't alone and that waiters and chambermaids were busily running about the halls at that hour probably was the reason nothing happened.

The reporter then checked out of the hotel and went to the airport. After he checked through customs a man who looked like one of his morning "callers" appeared at the gate, but could not get through for lack of papers.

Raymond said that when he was in New York working on the case about three weeks ago, he received an anonymous phone call telling him to "lay off the Kaplan case."

Since Kaplan's defense attorney has been quoted as saying that it was a perversion of Mexican law to convict him, and that there was no proof whatever that a man named Vidal was in fact killed, it is expected that the tribunal will free Kaplan shortly.

However, Raymond has reservations about this optimistic viewpoint because of the many difficulties encountered during his recent week's stay here.

The California reporter said that he expected to have his story ready for publication in Ramparts magazine in about two months.